

Emergency Preparedness

The Problem

After the events of Hurricane Katrina and other natural disasters that have occurred around the world, it is crucial that our state examine its own emergency preparedness and act quickly to remedy any shortcomings.

The Solution

Senate Republicans are dedicated to finding our emergency preparedness weaknesses and providing solutions. Local emergency responders are our first responders and therefore critically important. This means we must make sure our local communities – from families to local governments – are prepared.

Background

- The Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD) oversees our state's comprehensive emergency management plan. The EMD's mission is to coordinate and facilitate resources and minimize the impacts of disasters and emergencies on people, property, the environment and the economy.
- Counties and cities are required to establish a local emergency management organization and prepare a local emergency management plan.
- In 2003, Senate Republicans provided the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) with \$4.8 million to map every public high school in the state. Those maps are used for emergency response. The same year, the Legislature passed a bill that allowed WASPC to map every public building in the state when funds were available. In 2005, the Legislature provided WASPC with \$4.5 million to map every public middle and elementary school.
- In 2003, Republicans authorized the Department of Health to give the EMD contact information on health care professionals who were willing to volunteer during emergencies.
- In 2001, the Legislature authorized the establishment of a School Safety Center that provides schools with a model comprehensive safety plan and offers assistance to schools in developing their plans.
- In 1995, a Republican-sponsored bill transferred the emergency management functions from the Department of Community Development to the Military Department. This legislation also required the Military Department to develop a strategic plan that would enhance coordination and efficiency and decrease costs.

SRC Goals

- Create clear lines of communication between local, state, and federal government. This will help prevent confusion during an emergency.
- Create a community outreach plan to inform and prepare the public for various emergencies. This includes working with local governments to make sure they have an adequate emergency plan as well as informing families about the importance of individual responsibility.
- Develop emergency centers around the state.

- Establish a comprehensive state/local emergency recovery plan. Preparing for what occurs after a disaster is crucial to the health of our citizens as well as to our economy and environment.
- Put in place a comprehensive mobilization plan in place for the most vulnerable citizens, including the elderly, disabled, and low-income families.
- Revise and update our state's emergency notification response system.